

## Hide by [carrymehome](#)

**Category:** Stranger Things, 2016

**Language:** English

**Status:** In-Progress

**Published:** 2018-09-10 22:47:49

**Updated:** 2018-09-18 10:46:59

**Packaged:** 2019-12-12 22:47:33

**Rating:** T

**Chapters:** 3

**Words:** 2,988

**Publisher:** [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

**Summary:** A series of one shot character explorations all centered on a single theme and how each character relates to that theme. It's going to be awhile before I have the stamina for another multichapter story. This is more bite sized.

## 1. Will Byers

*Let me go. To Lonnie's. If Will's there, it means he ran away. If he sees the cops there, he'll think he's in trouble. He'll hide. You know, he's good at hiding.*

.....

His father wasn't always angry.

Sometimes Lonnie tried to teach Will something and no matter how little Will was actually interested in baiting a hook or the correct way to throw a ball, he hid his apathy for the subject at hand. As long as Will feigned an interest, or at least successfully concealed his disinterest, for that moment, however long it lasted, he wasn't a disappointment, a burden, an embarrassment.

Those moments couldn't last forever, of course. Eventually, Will's lack of athleticism or his squeamishness would show through. And then Lonnie wouldn't hesitate to show Will just how he felt. Jonathan wasn't a budding outdoorsman or an athlete either. Neither of the Byers boys showed any sort of aptitude for anything their father considered to be worthwhile masculine pursuits, something Lonnie complained bitterly about to Joyce who he blamed for making them soft. Mama's boys, both of them. It would have been better to have had daughters. But at least Jonathan could fight back and in a strange sort of way, their father respected that.

Will wondered sometimes when his father baited him and baited him and baited him if Lonnie wasn't trying to see just how hard he had to push Will before Will pushed back. For Jonathan the tipping point had been when Will needed protection. Will remembered the day clearly, the first time Jonathan ever struck their father. He'd been watching a Chicago Cubs game. Any real Cubs fan should have been comfortable with the inevitability of a losing season, but for reasons unknown Lonnie had placed an ill advised wager on this particular game and his mood increasingly soured as any hope of replacing the tires on his truck faded further away with each passing inning.

Will had the misfortune of returning home just at the moment when

the Cubs gave up yet another two runs. And worse yet, he came home on the heels of yet another humiliating incident at the hands of the class bully.

"What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing," Will knew how to read his father quickly and accurately and adjust himself accordingly. Injured feelings were not going to be tolerated and he knew it.

The Cubs let another run get past them and because Lonnie couldn't bear to look at the game for one more second, he focused on Will instead. "Don't lie to me, boy." His voice was dangerous and it stopped Will dead in his tracks. Will ducked his head and hoped the tears he felt welling in his eyes weren't visible.

"Really, Dad, I'm fine. I just felt like coming home is all."

"You're letting someone pick on you, aren't you?" As though being targeted was a character flaw on his part.

"I-I-I just..I," Will stammered, not quite sure why he was in trouble other than he was weak and his father despised weakness. And then whatever was left of Will's facade melted away and the tears he'd hoped would stay hidden betrayed him and rolled down his cheeks. Lonnie was incensed.

"You're *crying* now? Jesus Christ! How in the hell did I get stuck with two pansies for sons. You knock that shit off right now or I'll give you something to cry about!"

"I'm sorry," Will half whispered, but if anything, his submission only made Lonnie more angry. Will tried to control it, but he choked out a sob. And his father lost it.

Jonathan came home to find Will his face a mixture of snot and tears, his eyes fixated on Lonnie, frozen by the unmistakable sound of a leather belt being pulled through denim belt loops.

"Leave him alone!" It took everyone (including Jonathan himself) a beat to realize Jonathan was the one who had yelled at Lonnie. Will couldn't remember whether he'd actually heard Jonathan telling him

to hide, but verbal or not, the message was very clear. Will ran out the backdoor and hid in the bushes at the edge of their property while all hell broke loose inside.

After what seemed like an eternity, Lonnie staggered outside sporting a split lip and what would ultimately darken into a black eye. He got into his truck, slammed the door and skidded out of the driveway in reverse. For his part, Jonathan wore long sleeves even though it was summer and sat perched at the very edge of his chair for the next week, but never admitted to having sustained any injuries.

That was the summer Jonathan helped him build Castle Byers. Will had been reading *A Bridge to Terabithia* and wished for his own island on which to build an imaginary country. Jonathan couldn't find him an island, but he could build him a sanctuary out of scrap wood and trash. A place where bullies (even those of the grown man variety) wouldn't find him. A refuge. A safe haven.

As it turns out, some monsters are harder to hide from than others.

## 2. Jim Hopper

*"In many ways, Hopper likes to hide and he doesn't want people to see the pain that he experiences every day and doesn't want people to see what he's feeling. So he has this big wide brim, a 3 inch rim that he can pull down and hide behind." David Harbour on Hopper's hat.*

. . .

Jim Hopper grew up in a world where boys weren't supposed to cry. Not even when they fell off their bikes and took half the skin off their elbows. Not even when they sat in the high school parking lot while the love of their life was at the senior prom with someone else. Not even when their little girl, who had absorbed more pain than should ever possibly fit into such a tiny body, finally just stopped. Not even then. Which is why he found himself alone collapsing into the corner of a rarely used stairwell. In the world Jim Hopper grew up in, boys weren't supposed to cry, so when they did, they made damn sure they didn't have an audience.

The world didn't have the decency to even slow down for a damned minute so he could just get off, so he stayed on. He sheltered in place. He did what it took to wait out the rest of his time that he neither wanted nor deserved. And that time passed. And the pain remained, but it was less raw. Most of the time. And he built something that at least resembled a life. He went back home where life was easier. He took a position of authority that allowed him to force people to remain an arm's length away and to experience the illusion of control. However broken he was inside, outside he was charming when convenient, gruff when necessary and sharp witted always. He wore his uniform like armor and took to wearing his grandfather's hat like a shield, hiding his eyes when they threatened to give him away. And from time to time when he collapsed under the weight of it all, he made damn sure no one saw. That's what pills were for. And alcohol. And women. Because boys weren't supposed to cry.

The funny thing about purgatory though is that it's not intended to be a permanent destination. It's a place of pain and suffering just this side of Hell, but it's also a place of purification and redemption just this side of paradise. For Jim Hopper, the opportunity for purification

came expertly disguised as his first missing person case since returning home: Will Byers.

He'd avoided children for years. Hated them, really, which is an objectively terrible thing to say. But it was too hard to feel the pain children who were not Sara inflicted on him, so he went with anger instead which was a far easier emotion to deal with. Boys weren't supposed to cry, but they could be angry. He also found it easier to be angry at Joyce Byres than to be hurt by her, so when she came to his office demanding that he look for her son, there was a small ugly part of him that was actually glad that she was experiencing some of the pain that had become his daily reality. Misery loves company, right?

He didn't want to look for Will Byers, but he did. And in looking for, not just one missing child, but two, hidden by layers of government conspiracies and shit he thought only happened in horror movies, Jim Hopper most unexpectedly found...himself. In all his glory and in all his shame. He stopped hiding from himself and confronted the demons that had kept him just this side of Hell for the last five years. Redemption was the way out of purgatory and the first step towards redemption is forgiveness. No one was more shocked than he by the revelation that he was a person worthy of forgiveness.

He'd avoided children for years, and so it was particularly surprising that this particular man stopped by the woods on a snowy evening to...to do what, exactly? To deliver a meal to someone he didn't even know was out there? To try to right a wrong that might be irreparable? To save one little girl in order to make up for the one he failed so completely?

He left the food in a wooden box. Reverently, almost as though it was an offering being laid at an altar. But really, it was more than just food. It was a lifeline he threw into the abyss. An attempt to show the only other soul more lost than he the way out of her own purgatory just this side of Hell. If she was out there, if she saw him, she didn't reach for the hand he extended.

Until she did.

Until hunger and desperation and maybe even a little bit of hope

drove her to reveal herself to him.

He heard the noise behind him and stopped. Stopped walking, stopped breathing, and allowed himself to hope it was her and not just an animal. She placed herself before him, like an offering at an altar, risking everything for the chance at a way out of purgatory.

Before he could even close his mouth from the shock of it all, he pulled the hat from his head.

**A/N. Go watch the first couple minutes of S2E3 and you'll see what I'm talking about. David Harbour has talked about the meaning of Hopper's hat in several interviews and so I rewatched his scenes looking at how that prop is used (because nothing in Stranger Things is an accident) and I was struck by this scene in particular.**

### 3. Jonathon Byers

*I guess I'd rather observe people then, you know—"*

*"—Talk to them?"*

... ..

"He has an eye for photography," the high school art teacher told his mother while she mentally calculated what it would take to get him a decent camera from the pawn shop. It wasn't inaccurate but it wasn't the whole truth either. What Jonathan really had was an eye for people.

He got them. He looked quickly through their pretenses and well maintained images and saw them for who they really were. And often, far too often, he didn't like what he found. A father who was only interested in him if he shared the father's interests and never the other way around. Classmates who prided themselves on their own individuality and yet attacked anything truly unique as though it was a threat to their very existence. Adults who claimed moral authority but did what was easy far more frequently than what was right. The insecurity, hypocrisy and selfishness he saw on the inside made him hate the perfectly crafted and polished exteriors.

He used his camera to see through the bullshit like a set of X-ray glasses advertised in the back of comic books. He caught people at their most real, their most vulnerable. And while he used his camera lens to peer into someone else's soul, he took advantage of the fact that a camera is not a two way window. The convenient thing about being behind the camera revealing to vulnerability of others is that it prevents the photographer from being in front of the camera, from being exposed himself. Not that anyone actually made an effort to coax Jonathan Byers out from behind the camera or to reveal himself to them. He was widely written off as pretentious at best and creepy at worst. Even in a school as small as Hawkins High School, there were many in his class who simply didn't see him, preferring to ignore the inconvenience of his existence. And if he were being honest, the feeling was mutual. It was far easier for Jonathan to write off the vast majority than to sort out who was and was not worth the

risk of exposure.

Until his little brother vanished.

Then, all of a sudden, Jonathan Byers became visible. Noticeable. Interesting, albeit in a very unflattering cloud of suspicion sort of way. He also needed an ally which was a new and threatening prospect unto itself. It's funny how the possibility of the world ending has a way of inspiring personal growth. Equally funny how when the possibility of the world ending abates, all anyone wants to do is to return to normal, to comfort, to familiarity. And this is how, once the dust settled enough for him to try to see beyond his own family, Jonathan found himself sitting on the outside looking in at his ally who had just gifted him his favorite tool for keeping everyone else at a safe distance: a camera.

It didn't matter, he convinced himself. He got his little brother back and that was all he wanted, right? And she had what she wanted...or at least who she wanted. It was better this way. Really.

"You want to skip fourth period?" She asked so lightly that she could not possibly understand that what she was really offering was a way out of the shadows of obscurity, an invitation. He was in. He didn't even need to know her plan, he just had to know that it came with the promise of the alliance he wouldn't admit he'd been missing. They learned a lot of things on that mission. That the gateway to hell was still open for business. That the people responsible were replaced with new people with no interest in taking responsibility. That without them, Barb's grieving parents would never get any closure.

That she had waited for him.

That a month was simultaneously too long and not long enough.

... ..

"Trust issues, right? Something to do with your dad."

*Trust issues.*

Jonathan did *not* have trust issues.

He wasn't the kid who carried around the scars of parental rejection, ever hopeful that maybe one day he'd be good enough for his own father to want him. Jonathan had rejected Lonnie because he decided the man wasn't worth his time, not the other way around.

*Trust issues.*

Jonathan didn't avoid other people because he didn't *trust* them, he avoided other people because he didn't *like* them. There was a difference. And why would he open himself up to people he didn't like? People who he already knew would reject him. That's not having trust issues, that's just good sense.

At least Nancy agreed with him. Who did Murray Bauman think he was, anyway? Assuming he knew them better than they knew themselves after only a few hours.

*Trust issues.*

He certainly wasn't keeping Nancy at arm's length. They were friends, that wasn't arm's length. Aside from his own mother and brother, he was closer to her than anyone. And besides, she moved on before he'd gotten his bearings, so it was pretty obvious what she wanted. Steve turned out to be...not as bad as he could have been, but still pretty shallow. Still heavily invested in the currency of his own popularity. And if that's what Nancy wanted, why should he open himself up to someone who picked someone who was so utterly unlike him? That's just self preservation.

*Trust issues.*

But then again...

*...We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be...*

Maybe it was easier to remain invisible. Maybe he stayed on the outside looking in because the outside was familiar. Maybe he'd become who he needed to be, instead of who he was.

Maybe...

A/N I quite enjoy that scene where Jonathan is on the pull out repeating "trust issues" to himself, wrapping his brain around the whole idea. I feel like it's a turning point for his character.

"We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be." Credited to Kurt Vonnegut, Mother Night.

Because, hello, Jonathon.

Thanks for the feedback. These are short little pieces to write, which has been a fun change of pace. Now to decide who's next...

Additional note to My Secret Garden: I do have a tendency to get wrapped up, however, it was my husband who got me turned me onto Vonnegut back when we were dating. I plan on engraving "So it goes" on his gravestone.